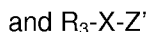
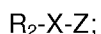
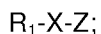


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims replaces all other listings of claims.

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A biocompatible composition comprising microbubbles encapsulating a gas within a shell comprising a plurality of polar head groups, each polar head group linked to a straight-chained hydrophobic group selected as having [[a]] different chain lengths ~~length different from an adjacent hydrophobic group and~~ sufficient for the longer chains to assemble beneath the adjacent shorter chains thereby enhancing rigidity of the shell, the hydrophobic groups oriented toward the gas.

2. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The composition of Claim 1 wherein the compounds have the structure:



where R_1 , R_2 and R_3 are hydrophobic groups selected from the group consisting of straight-chained alkyls, alkylethers, alkylthioethers, alkyldisulfides, polyfluoroalkyls, and polyfluoroalkylethers having a carbon chain length greater than or equal to 16 and less than or equal to 32 and where R_1 is greater than R_2 and R_1 is greater than or equal to R_3 ; R_3 has one or more such hydrophobic groups having the same or different lengths; X is a linker connecting the hydrophobic group to the polar head group; Z is a polar head group selected from the group consisting of $\text{CO}_2\text{-M}^+$, $\text{SO}_3\text{-M}^+$, $\text{SO}_4\text{-M}^+$, $\text{PO}_3\text{-M}^+$, $\text{PO}_4\text{-M}^{+2}$, N(R)_4^+ , a pyridinium or substituted pyridinium group, and a zwitterionic group; R is selected from the group consisting of -H, -CH₃, alkyl, cycloalkyl, substituted cycloalkyls containing one or more heteroatoms, and benzyl and can be the same or different; and Z' is a nonionic group.

3. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The composition of Claim 2 wherein R_1 , R_2 and R_3 are straight-chained alkyl groups having from about 20 to 30 carbon atoms.

4. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The composition of Claim 2 wherein X is selected from the group consisting of $-(\text{CH}_2)_m-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{CO}_2(\text{CH}_2)_n-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{CONH}(\text{CH}_2)_n-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{NHCONH}(\text{CH}_2)_n-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{OCONH}(\text{CH}_2)_n-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{O}(\text{CH}_2)_n-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{NH}(\text{CH}_2)_n-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{N}[(\text{CH}_2)_m]_2-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{S}(\text{CH}_2)_n-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{SO}(\text{CH}_2)_n-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{SO}_2(\text{CH}_2)_n-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{NH}(\text{CH}_2)_n\text{CO}_2(\text{CH}_2)_o-$,

$-\text{[(CH}_2\text{)}_m\text{]}_2\text{N(CH}_2\text{)}_n\text{CONH(CH}_2\text{)}_o-$, where m, n, and o are the same or different and are less than 5, DL-lysine, aspartic acid, glutamic acid, serine, cysteine, homocysteine, cystine, serinol, itaconic acid, tigilic acid, maleic acid, DL-malic acid, succinic acid, tartaric acid, malonic acid, citric acid, phthalic acid, terephthalic acid, N,N-bis[2-hydroxyethyl]-2-aminoethanesulfonic acid, N,N-bis(2-hydroxyethyl)glycine, 3-[N,N-bis(2-hydroxyethyl)amino]-2-hydroxypropanesulfonic acid, N-tris[hydroxymethyl]methyl-3-aminopropanesulfonic acid, and N-tris[hydroxymethyl]glycine.

5. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The composition of Claim 2 wherein Z' is selected from the group consisting of polysorbates, polyglycerols, polypeptides, polynucleotides, polysaccharides, polyvinylpyrrolidones, polyvinylalcohols, polyethyleneglycols, and combinations thereof.

6. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The composition of Claim 2 wherein Z' is poly(ethyleneglycol) with the number of ethyleneglycol monomer units greater than or equal to 20.

7. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method for obtaining an ultrasound contrast image of body tissue comprising:

administering into a body a biocompatible composition useful as an ultrasound contrast agent comprising microbubbles encapsulating a gas within a shell comprising a plurality of polar head groups, each polar head group linked to a straight-chained hydrophobic group selected as having [[a]] different chain lengths ~~length different from an adjacent hydrophobic group and~~ sufficient for ~~the~~ longer chains to assemble beneath ~~the~~ adjacent shorter chains thereby enhancing rigidity of the shell, the hydrophobic groups oriented toward the gas, and taking an ultrasound image of the desired tissue.

8. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of Claim 7 wherein the compounds have the structure:

$\text{R}_1\text{-X-Z;}$

$\text{R}_2\text{-X-Z;}$

and $\text{R}_3\text{-X-Z'}$

where R_1 , R_2 and R_3 are hydrophobic groups selected from the group consisting of straight-chained alkyls, alkylethers, alkylthioethers, alkyldisulfides, polyfluoroalkyls, and polyfluoroalkylethers having a carbon chain length greater than or equal to 16 and less than or equal to 32 and where R_1 is greater than R_2 and R_1 is greater than or equal to R_3 ; R_3 has one or more such hydrophobic groups having the same or different lengths; X is a linker connecting the

hydrophobic group to the polar head group; Z is a polar head group selected from the group consisting of CO_2^-M^+ , SO_3^-M^+ , SO_4^-M^+ , PO_3^-M^+ , PO_4^-M^+ , N(R)_4^+ , a pyridinium or substituted pyridinium group, and a zwitterionic group; R is selected from the group consisting of -H, -CH₃, alkyl, cycloalkyl, substituted cycloalkyls containing one or more heteroatoms, and benzyl and can be the same or different; and Z' is a nonionic group.

9. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of Claim 8 wherein R₁, R₂ and R₃ are straight-chained alkyl groups having from about 20 to 30 carbon atoms.

10. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of Claim 8 wherein X is selected from the group consisting of $-(\text{CH}_2)_m-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{CO}_2(\text{CH}_2)_n-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{CONH}(\text{CH}_2)_n-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{NHCONH}(\text{CH}_2)_n-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{OCONH}(\text{CH}_2)_n-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{O}(\text{CH}_2)_n-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{NH}(\text{CH}_2)_n-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{N}[(\text{CH}_2)_m]_2-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{S}(\text{CH}_2)_n-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{SO}(\text{CH}_2)_n-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{SO}_2(\text{CH}_2)_n-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{NH}(\text{CH}_2)_n\text{CO}_2(\text{CH}_2)_o-$, $-(\text{CH}_2)_m]_2\text{N}(\text{CH}_2)_n\text{CONH}(\text{CH}_2)_o-$, where m, n, and o are the same or different and are less than 5, DL-lysine, aspartic acid, glutamic acid, serine, cysteine, homocysteine, cystine, serinol, itaconic acid, tigilic acid, maleic acid, DL-malic acid, succinic acid, tartaric acid, malonic acid, citric acid, phthalic acid, terephthalic acid, N,N-bis[2-hydroxyethyl]-2-aminoethanesulfonic acid, N,N-bis(2-hydroxyethyl)glycine, 3-[N,N-bis(2-hydroxyethyl)amino]-2-hydroxypropanesulfonic acid, N-tris[hydroxymethyl]methyl-3-aminopropanesulfonic acid, and N-tris[hydroxymethyl]glycine.

11. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of Claim 8 wherein Z' is selected from the group consisting of polysorbates, polyglycerols, polypeptides, polynucleotides, polysaccharides, polyvinylpyrrolidones, polyvinylalcohols, polyethyleneglycols, and combinations thereof.

12. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of Claim 8 wherein Z' is poly(ethyleneglycol) with the number of ethyleneglycol monomer units greater than or equal to 20.

13. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of Claim 7 wherein the tissue is the heart and the image is a myocardial perfusion image.

14-20. (CANCELED)